

LODGE NIGHT

In these busy days, when we wonder how long our nervous energy can last, and whether, after the closing of our war work, we can meet the drains of the strenuous days to come, how many of us appreciate what "Lodge Night" can be made to mean to us? We have given so much of ourselves to the great cause, during the war - and this may almost be said to apply to us in inverse ratio to the demands upon our time - that there is an unrest in our souls, which not even a prolonged vacation can overcome. Perhaps it is the strain which is pervading those who call themselves our "working classes" and makes them oversensitive to the so-called enticements of bolshevism and other "isms." Who knows? Is the whole atmosphere of unrest which pervades the world nothing but this? Has our sense of fairness been so internationalized that we cannot reduce its horizon? Has the reawakening of the instinct of brute force done for us that which we intended it to do for our late enemy? Has the determination to win focused our mental eyes on selfish things?

Ask these things of yourself, my brother. Then consider what "lodge night" meant to your father. To him it was a time of relaxation, characterized by an exchange of confidences, a haven of rest. He mixed up with the ritualistic consideration of higher things a few hours of that close, intimate, warmly-personal fellowship which in these modern days we sometimes call gossip. Those things which affected the welfare of his brother were of moment to him. At least half of the enjoyment of the meeting was the ante-room talk and the almost hilarious accompaniment of the session - sandwiches and coffee. Nowadays the lodge meeting begins just before or just after the dinner hour - or as often in the afternoon, so that the degree mill can complete its work. And by the time the lodge closes, everyone is so tired that there is a rush home for bed, unless there is to be a banquet, with long, barren, boring talks. Of real fellowship there is little. We say there is not time. WHY is there not time?

Dare you take your lodge's temperature? Is there not evidence that in Masonry, as in nearly all things else, we are feverish? Do we ever sit around a steam radiator, as our fathers sat around the red hot stove, and talk and talk and talk, settling all the great problems of the universe? We don't! We think of such discussions, with an occasional story that would not pass muster in a drawing room, as "a waste of time." Was it that? Or did it serve a purpose?

A salesman who traveled by an overland route called one day on an Arkansas farmer. An exchange of "howdydos" was followed by an elaborate presentation to the farmer of the merits of some stock-food. The farmer was not interested. More argument on the part of the salesman. Still no evidence of interest. "This food, mixed with the regular grain diet which you now feed, will increase your production." "Yaas." "Don't you see, if you will buy five hundred pounds of this food, and mix it with the corn and oats you now feed, you will save time?" "Mebby so, yes." "Won't you try it?" "Nope." "Now, you don't seem to understand what I'm saying. If you will mix this food, about one bushel to five of your regular grain rations, the hog will fatten in two months as much as he would fatten without this food in three months. Don't you see how much time will be saved?" "Yaas, but what's time to a hog?" Ye Scribe would cast no aspersions at ritualism - he is a ritualist himself - but if we remain ritual worshippers only we are no more progressive than the farmer. Our Fraternity may well spend time in serious consideration of an exchange of much of our ritual for a sane and up-to-date interpretation of it.

Whether our descent be from guilds, companies or colleges of artificers means little unless we apply the principle of education which was the foundation of them all. "Apprentice, Fellow Craft, Master" - even the words denote progress. The lodge was a school in practical things. He who presided was a skilled artisan, all the more so if he were in fact an architect. The teaching was an application of a great heritage of principles to the work in hand, the labor of the day or year.

The lesson is obvious, and absurdly simple.

The crying need of our Fraternity today is for a leadership which will grasp the meaning of these fundamental truths. What possible excuse can we offer to posterity for an arrested development? We can boast of our numbers, our wealth and the character of our membership. Each of these elements is potentially virile and upstanding. Why are 2,000,000 of us, individually so strong, so impotent as a group? America - the World - craves most, without knowing it, that which is our priceless heritage. True brotherhood, put into action, will heal the misunderstandings, direct the latent energies and palsy the hand of hate. It is written in our fundamental documents, both as a nation and as a Fraternity. Time was when our Masonic forbears were writing those documents, and upholding our Government - challenging all who would break it down. The Government and the Fraternity were both weak in numbers, in those days. Today there is an increasing number of those who point to that Government as a monument of failure. In essence they claim that the brotherhood has all oozed out of it.

Ought not every Mason to be a missionary in behalf of this great governmental experiment - if, in fact, it remains an experiment any longer? Missionaries have to be taught, if they would be efficient exponents of their doctrine.

Who is going to teach them?

Is not the task a worthy one? Will it not make "Lodge Night" worth while?

G.L.S.

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